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ABSTRACT

An brief overview of the Achievement Testing Program conducted by Alberta Education (AE) during 1980-90 is provided. The program provides AE, jurisdictions, schools, and the public with information about students' knowledge and skills in relation to objectives in the provincial program of studies. Program tests are administered every 4 years on a rotating basis in grades 3, 6, and 9 for language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. French language arts tests are available for administration along with English language arts tests. All students in grades 3, 6, and 9 who have been taught, in English, the subjects being tested, are required to participate in the program. The tests are designed to provide group, not individual, results and are not used for placement or promotion purposes. Topics covered in this bulletin include the development of the test, field testing, format of the tests, exemption policy, French translations, test security, violation of test rules, special provisions, communication of testing plans and results to parents and students, achievement testing schedule, procedures for administration and marking, and the reporting of test results. Lists of test rules and special provisions and names and addresses of contacts at AE are provided. (TJH)

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Achievement Testing Program

GENERAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

School Year 1989-90

Students First!

Student Evaluation and Records

Alberta EDUCATION

November 1989

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

DISTRIBUTION: Superintendents of Schools • School Principals and Teachers • The Alberta Teachers' Association • Alberta School Trustees' Association • Alberta Education • General Public Upon Request

The *General Information Bulletin* includes recommendations and directives issued by the Director, Student Evaluation and Records Branch, under the authority of the *Student Evaluation Regulation* 40/89 pursuant to the *School Act, Chapter S-3.1, 1988.*

In this bulletin,

a. "Director" means the Director of the Student Evaluation and Records Branch of the Department of Education;

b. "Student" means a student as defined in the *School Act.*

Those statements (directives) that are mandatory
are marked with the symbol ▌ in the left-hand margin.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Achievement Testing Program provides Alberta Education, jurisdictions, schools, and the public with information about students' knowledge and skills in relation to objectives in the provincial program of studies. The Achievement Testing Program enables Alberta Education and school jurisdiction personnel to monitor changes in student achievement over time. The tests are administered every four years on a rotating basis in grades 3, 6, and 9 language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. As well, French Language Arts Tests are developed and are available for administration along with English Language Arts Tests. All students in grades 3, 6, and 9 who have been taught in English the subject being tested are required to participate in the program.

The achievement tests are designed to provide group results, not individual results. The tests are not intended for student placement or promotion purposes.

SECTION 2: ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

"Developing Achievement Tests" Brochure

A brochure entitled "Developing Achievement Tests" describes the process followed in the preparation of tests. Copies are available from the Student Evaluation and Records Branch. (See Appendix C, page 15.)

Field Testing

Field tests are conducted to validate all questions before they appear on achievement tests. Schools that wish to participate in field testing should contact the field testing team of the Student Evaluation and Records Branch. (See Appendix C, page 15.)

Format

The achievement tests, and their blueprints and scoring guides are based on the objectives prescribed in the *Program of Studies for Elementary School* (amended 1982), and the *Program of Studies for Junior High School*. All multiple-choice and written- response questions are developed according to curriculum specifications for the subject being tested. These specifications are distributed to schools in the year of testing by Alberta Education. Test bulletins, which contain descriptions of the achievement tests and methods of scoring, are distributed to superintendents, principals, teachers, and trustees at the beginning of each school year.

Exemption Policy

The only students who may be excused from participating in the Achievement Testing Program are those for whom the test is inappropriate. They are:

- students who are enrolled in an approved program that has been designed for those with special needs
- students who were taught the subject being tested in another semester or year
- students who are enrolled in an English as a Second Language program
- students who are being taught the specific subject being tested in a language other than English

Any exemptions must be identified by the principal and approved by the superintendent. Exemptions for reasons other than those outlined above must be approved by the Director of the Student Evaluation and Records Branch.

Immediately following the administration of a test, the principal is requested to list all student exemptions and absences on the Principal's Report.

French Translations

Grades 6 and 9 achievement tests are translated into French. This year, French translations of the Grade 6 Science achievement test are available.

Superintendents who wish to have students write the tests in French must include this information on the enrolment forms that are mailed February 1, 1990, to be returned by March 9, 1990.

Participation in the Achievement Testing Program is voluntary for students enrolled in French Language programs. However, all Grade 9 students are expected to write the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test in 1990. Students in Francophone and French Immersion programs are encouraged to write the French translation of the Grade 6 Science Achievement Test and the Grade 9 French Language Arts Tests.

Results for students who write the achievement tests in French are reported separately.

Security

Superintendents and principals must secure achievement tests prior to administration. When a breach of security occurs or is suspected, the superintendent or principal must immediately notify the Assistant Director, Examination Administration and Support Services (see Appendix C, page 17).

All the used test booklets and answer sheets with student responses must be returned to the Student Evaluation and Records Branch for marking. Test booklets and answer sheets used by students are confidential and must be secured by principals and superintendents.

Unused test booklets and answer sheets remain in the school.

Violation of Test Rules

Principals and teachers must ensure that all test rules are adhered to. This is necessary in order to ensure valid and reliable test results. Please refer to Appendix A, page 12, for the list of Test Rules.

Immediately following the administration of a test, the principal is required to report on the Principal's Statement any circumstances that may affect the validity of student results.

SECTION 3: SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Because Alberta Education is committed to providing equal access for all students, every reasonable effort is made to enable students with physical disabilities to write achievement tests.

Students who have physical disabilities may be granted one or more of the following special provisions:

a) services of a scribe;
b) use of a word processor, typewriter, or versabrailler;
c) use of a tape recorder or dictaphone in lieu of a scribe;
d) services of a person skilled in using sign language to sign test questions only;
e) specially printed tests (e.g., large print and braille);
f) additional writing time; and
g) exemption from writing

Principals must submit a written request to the Director, Student Evaluation and Records Branch, indicating the name of the student, the disability of the student, and the specific provisions required. This request must be forwarded a minimum of 30 days in advance of the writing date. Requests for tests in braille must be received at least 90 days in advance of the writing date. (See Appendix C, Guidelines and Procedures, page 15.)

SECTION 4: COMMUNICATING TO PARENTS AND STUDENTS

The goal of the Achievement Testing Program is to obtain valid and reliable information about levels of student achievement. How and what educators communicate to students and parents about the achievement tests affects how well this goal is met. Similarly, validity and reliability are affected by the preparations that are undertaken before the tests are administered. An effective approach to communicating about, and preparing for, the achievement test would include the elements suggested below.

Communication

a. The school should develop a plan for communicating with students and parents about the achievement test administration. The communication should describe

- the purpose of achievement testing,
- when the test will be administered,
- what the test will be like,
- how the results will be used, and
- how the results will be reported.

b. The principal and teachers should display a positive and relaxed attitude toward testing.

Preparation

The school should develop a plan for ensuring that:

a. the test-taking environment is appropriate, particularly by

- selecting a test site that meets the security and supervision requirements but that is familiar and comfortable to students, and
- scheduling other school activities so that there are no competing demands on students' attention shortly before, during, or immediately following the test administration.

b. where rest periods have been included in the test design, they are used effectively to meet the physical, social, and psychological needs of students.

c. pretest activities will develop effective and appropriate test-taking skills and attitudes by

- familiarizing students with test and question formats through a review of the sample questions included in the test bulletins,
- discussing ways to use the available time effectively, and
- encouraging students to take risks.

We caution teachers, however, against excessive test rehearsal and coaching. Research indicates that preparation that goes beyond familiarizing students with the broad outlines of the testing situation has a negligible impact on test outcomes.

Local boards, schools, and teachers may find it useful to adapt the following sample letter for distribution to parents, for use as an item in district and school newsletters, or as a point of departure for discussion at a Home and School Association meeting.

SAMPLE LETTER

June 1, 1990

To Parents of Students in Grade 6:

On the morning of Tuesday, June 12, 1990, Grade 6 students in all parts of the province will write the achievement test in science.

The Grade 6 Science Achievement Test is one of a series of tests developed by Alberta Education for administration to students in grades 3, 6, and 9. The Grade 6 Science Achievement Test is a 60-minute, multiple-choice test. The results will provide valuable information about what students know and can do in science. This information will help identify strengths and weaknesses in the delivery of science education at our school and will help Alberta Education to improve the science curriculum.

This achievement test will NOT affect your child's marks, and no preparation beyond normal classroom instruction is required to write it. While we encourage students to do their best, all we ask is that they get a good night's sleep, have a good breakfast, and come to the classroom relaxed. A confident attitude to testing is the best possible preparation.

The achievement tests are marked and analysed over the summer, and the results are released by Alberta Education in October. In November, we will feature a discussion of our performance on the Grade 6 Science Achievement Test in our school newsletter. All parents are invited to discuss the results with us at that time.

Please call our school if you have any questions.

SECTION 5: ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCHEDULE

To ensure consistency and accuracy of results, the achievement tests must be administered on the scheduled dates and may not be rescheduled at another time.

Achievement Test Schedule 1990

Tuesday, June 12, 1990

Grade 3 Mathematics (a.m.)

Grade 6 Science (a.m.)*

Grade 9 English Language Arts (a.m. and p.m.)

Thursday, June 14, 1990

Grade 9 French Language Arts (a.m. and p.m.)

*Note: The French translation must be written at the same time.

Achievement Test Schedule 1991

Thursday, June 11, 1991

Grade 3 Science (a.m.)

Grade 6 Mathematics (a.m.)*

Grade 9 Social Studies (a.m.)*

*Note: The French translation must be written at the same time.

Significant Dates:

February 1, 1990	• Alberta Education ships enrolment forms to the central offices of all school jurisdictions
March 9, 1990	• Deadline for returning enrolment forms to Alberta Education
March 30, 1990	• Deadline for submitting lists of eligible markers and standard setters for the June marking session
May 28, 1990	• Alberta Education ships achievement testing materials to the central offices of all school jurisdictions
May 31, 1990	• Jurisdictions send achievement testing materials to schools

June 1, 1990	• Schools contact the jurisdiction office if they have not yet received their achievement testing materials • Contact the Student Evaluation and Records Branch if there are errors or omissions in the shipment
June 12, 1990	• Achievement tests are administered according to the schedule
June 14, 1990	• Grade 9 French Language Arts administered
June 14, 1990	• Return to Alberta Education all used testing materials
July 16-21, 1990	• Marking session for achievement tests

SECTION 6: PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTRATION AND MARKING

Distribution, Administration, and Collection of Achievement Tests

- **The Superintendent is ultimately responsible for the secure distribution, administration, and collection of tests within the jurisdiction.**

  Once the scheduled tests have been administered, the superintendent collects all test materials and forwards them to the Student Evaluation and Records Branch.

- **Principals must confirm student enrolment forms for submission to the Student Evaluation and Records Branch by March 9, 1990.**

- **The Principal is responsible for the administration of achievement tests within the school. The principal must keep all test materials secure and is responsible for the security, supervision, and collection of all the materials in the school.** The *Achievement Testing Program: Principal's Manual* is distributed to superintendents and principals approximately one month prior to the administration of the achievement tests.

  Details regarding the security, administration, and shipping procedures of the achievement tests can be found in the *Principal's Manual*.

Private Schools

- **The Regional Offices of Alberta Education are responsible for the distribution, administration, and collection of achievement tests in private schools.**

Marking and Standard Setting of Achievement Tests

After the tests have been written and submitted to Alberta Education, a group of approximately 20 classroom teachers for each subject tested assigns test scores that indicate the achievement necessary to meet the minimum acceptable performance level and the outstanding performance level for each test.

- **Teachers are selected to mark the written-response sections of the tests, as well as to set standards for each test. To be eligible to mark and/or set standards, a teacher must have taught the course for two or more years, be teaching the course in the current year, and have a valid Alberta Permanent Professional Certificate. To be selected as a marker or standard setter by the Student Evaluation and Records Branch, teachers must be recommended by their superintendents.**

  For the 1990 administration, Grade 9 English Language Arts and Grade 9 French Language Arts have a written-response section that will require markers. Teachers selected to mark the English and French language arts tests will also serve as standard setters for the tests they mark. The Grade 3 Mathematics and the Grade 6 Science achievement tests will require teachers to set standards only.

  Superintendents are requested to provide the Student Evaluation and Records Branch with their recommendations of eligible teachers by March 30, 1990.

SECTION 7: REPORTING TEST RESULTS

Each school jurisdiction receives a group report on student achievement as well as group reports for each school in the jurisdiction. Each school receives a group report on the achievement of its students. The *Achievement Testing Program Provincial Report* presents the overall results for the province. It parallels the jurisdiction and school reports in format, and contains guidelines for interpreting the jurisdiction and school results in relation to provincial norms.

Alberta Education does not issue individual results statements to students. However, individual student profiles are provided to superintendents and principals.

Any students qualified for exemption who write a test will not have their scores included in the provincial results. Separate jurisdiction and school reports will be prepared for these students.

Jurisdictions and schools who choose to have their Francophone and/or French Immersion program students write the Grade 6 Science Achievement Test either in English or in French translation will receive separate jurisdiction and school reports for those students. As well, the Student Evaluation and Records Branch is addressing methods of appropriately reporting these results and those for the Grade 9 French Language Arts Achievement Test on a provincial level. The preparation of a special report on results for students in French language programs is anticipated in the fall of 1990.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

TEST RULES

1. Time
   Tests must be written during the specified times.

2. Entrance to the Test Room
   Students may not enter or leave the test room without the consent of the supervising teacher.

3. Material Exchanges
   Neither copying nor exchanging of material between students is allowed. Notes, papers, or books must not be brought into the test room. Students must not talk, whisper, or exchange signs with one another.

4. Discussion
   Students may not discuss the test with the supervising teacher except when the test is incomplete or illegible.

5. Answer Sheets
   Only an HB pencil may be used to record answers on the multiple-choice answer sheet.

Appendix B

SPECIAL PROVISIONS: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

The following guidelines and procedures have been adapted from the *Special Examination Provisions for Students with a Physical Disability* policy for diploma examinations.

GUIDELINES

1. Special writing provisions should parallel as much as possible any special classroom and/or school procedures used to assist those students who have physical disabilities during the course of instruction and during regular evaluation in the school. The principal's request for special test taking provisions for a student should describe the type of test writing situation that most closely parallels the assistance usually given to that student.

2. Students who have physical disabilities may be granted one or more of the following special provisions for writing the achievement tests:

   a. services of a scribe;
   b. use of a word processor, typewriter, or versabrailler;
   c) use of a tape recorder or dictaphone in lieu of a scribe;
   d) services of a person skilled in using sign language to sign test questions only;
   e) specially printed tests (e.g., large print and braille);
   f) additional writing time; and
   g) exemption from writing

3. Requests for permission to use a word processor should be accompanied by the name and complete description of the word processing software to be used. The assistance of spell-check, grammar or punctuation scans, an on-line thesaurus, or style guides is not permitted.

4. Approval of extra writing time will be based on the practice normally followed by the school in evaluating the student. Ordinarily, the provision of extra time should be limited to one hour.

5. Special provisions actually followed during the test must be documented on the Principal's Statement following the writing of the test.

6. Marking procedures, evaluation criteria, and scoring standards will be the same for those students who write achievement tests under special conditions as for all students.

PROCEDURES

1. Principals should make the request for special provisions as soon as possible in the school year so that there will be adequate time for the request to be accommodated once approval is given.

   Requests for tests in braille must be received at least 90 days in advance of the writing date. Other requests must be forwarded a minimum of 30 days in advance of the writing date.

2. Principals should specify the name of the student, the disability of the student, and the specific provision required.

3. The principal is responsible for ensuring that the approved special provisions have been appropriately carried out and that test security has been maintained.

4. The principal is responsible for appointing a scribe or sign language interpreter as approved; arranging for appropriate space for the scribe, student, and observer; and verifying the accuracy of the scribe's or interpreter's statement of procedure.

5. Should a scribe be appointed, the scribe is responsible for

   a. recording the student's work with NO change of any kind;
   b. presenting a signed description of the procedures that were followed by the scribe to the principal for inclusion with the statement of test proceedings.

6. A scribe or sign language interpreter may not

   a. ask leading questions;
   b. provide suggestions or interpretations of any kind;
   c. correct spelling or grammar;
   d. make any changes to the student's work unless directed to do so by the student.

Appendix C

ALBERTA EDUCATION CONTACTS

STUDENT EVALUATION AND RECORDS BRANCH:

MAILING ADDRESS
Student Evaluation and Records Branch
Alberta Education
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2

OFFICE ADDRESS
Student Evaluation and
Records Branch
10045 - 111 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
FAX: 422-4200

For additional copies of this bulletin, or information regarding the distribution, administration, and collection of the 1990 Achievement Tests, contact:

Edith Zieber
Supervisor
Achievement Test Administration
Student Evaluation and Records Branch
Telephone: 422-4858

For reporting a breach of security or information regarding exemptions, test security, and test rules, contact:

Barry Krembil
Assistant Director
Examination Administration and Support Services
Student Evaluation and Records Branch
Telephone: 427-0010

For inquiries regarding the format and content of the achievement tests, standard setting, and marking, contact:

Dennis Belyk
Associate Director
Achievement Testing and Diagnostic Evaluation Program
Student Evaluation and Records Branch
Telephone: 427-2948

For inquiries regarding the school, jurisdiction, and provincial reports, contact:

Michael Robinson
Assistant Director
Data Analysis and Student Records
Student Evaluation and Records Branch
Telephone: 427-5306

For inquiries regarding field testing, contact:

Edgar Danard
Supervisor, Field Testing Administration
Student Evaluation and Records Branch
Telephone: 427-0227

For inquiries regarding course content and curriculum, contact:

Curriculum Design Branch
Alberta Education
Devonian Building, West Tower
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2
Telephone: 427-2984

Regional Offices of Alberta Education:

Calgary	297-6353
Edmonton	427-2952
Grande Prairie	538-5130
Lethbridge	381-5243
Red Deer	340-5262